

Ukraine by Vladimir Putin, now Finland and Sweden have said they want to become part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is certainly not what Mr. Putin contemplated when he said he was invading Ukraine because he didn't want a potential NATO member on his border. Well, as a result of his blundering invasion and wrongful invasion of Ukraine, he is now going to have Finland as a NATO partner on his border with some, I believe, roughly, 800 miles of common border.

We know that this is an increasingly challenging global threat landscape, and we have to do everything we can to make sure our troops have the training and the equipment and the resources needed to counter adversaries of today and tomorrow.

Given the state of the world, preserving our military readiness has never been more important. China and Russia have, obviously, grown more aggressive in their efforts to disrupt the global order. North Korea continues to threaten the United States and our allies with its nuclear capabilities. Iran, which is the largest state sponsor of terrorism, continues to threaten democracies in the Middle East, including our ally in Israel, and to threaten not only regional conflict but something worse.

This is a fragile time for global peace and security, and a strong National Defense Authorization Act is the principal way that we supply our military with the resources and certainty needed for our commanders to plan for the future.

But this legislation is about much more than maintaining a strong national defense. It is about empowering and supporting the men and women behind it. America's servicemembers are volunteers, and they have made a commitment not everyone is willing to make in joining the ranks of America's heroes who have defended our country throughout our Nation's history. They make sacrifices each and every day in order to keep our families safe and our Nation at peace, and we owe it to them to give them the support that they need. That includes not only the training, technology, and equipment they need to do their jobs but also the pay and benefits that their families depend on.

In short, a strong National Defense Authorization Act is critical to the success of our servicemembers, their families, American security, and, indeed, world peace. We simply can't neglect this important responsibility or delay it any longer. I think the majority leader, the Senator from New York, has already delayed it to the point that here we are, backed up against Christmas, with no time to spare. Congress needs to pass this annual Defense authorization bill ASAP—as soon as possible. I hear the House is planning to take up the Defense Authorization Act this week, and I hope that the Senate will follow in short order.

For the past 61 years in a row—61 years—Congress has managed to overcome partisan differences and pass this legislation. I hope that will continue this year, but I am becoming more and more concerned given the crunch that we are experiencing here 19 days before Christmas.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, once we pass the Defense authorization bill, which I hope we will do, we have one other big item on the "to do" list, and that is government funding.

You may ask: How in the world did we get here? Ordinarily, in what we sometimes refer to as "regular order" around here, the Appropriations Committee takes up and passes at the committee level 12 appropriations bills. These fund the entire government, from the Defense Department to Transportation, to Foreign Affairs, to—well, everything that the Federal Government does, which is our border security and the like.

What has happened is that that system has broken down and empowered not rank-and-file members of the Appropriations Committee or even rank-and-file Members of the Senate or Congress. What is happening is that this bill is being negotiated, probably on the order of almost \$1.7 trillion, behind closed doors by the leadership, and we will then be presented with a fait accompli. In other words, we will have two choices: to vote up or down on the annual appropriations bill. It is a ridiculous and embarrassing way to do business around here. It is certainly not transparent. It certainly doesn't provide the American people with the information they need in order to decide whether they think we are on the right track or the wrong track.

So here we are, more than 2 months into the fiscal year, and last year's business is still outstanding. Our Democratic colleagues hold the majority in the House and the Senate, as well as the White House. Despite their unilateral authority to set the schedule, they have failed in some of our most basic responsibilities, and that is to advance appropriations bills before the end of the fiscal year.

In September, they punted the funding deadline to December the 16th, which is just 10 days away. And it doesn't sound like much progress has been made. There is no agreement, even on a top-line number, which is the first step for coming up with a funding agreement.

To make matters worse, Democrats are still pushing for dramatic increases in nondefense domestic spending. Typically, these agreements include some sort of parity between defense and nondefense spending, but the spending habits of the last 2 years by the Democratic majority along party lines have been anything but typical.

First of all, our Democratic colleagues stole the taxpayer credit card and went on not one but two spending sprees. The first was called the Amer-

ican Rescue Plan, which included a long list of progressive social policies. That bill cost taxpayers \$1.9 trillion—party-line vote, borrowed money that somebody is going to have to pay off someday.

A few months ago, our colleagues went on a second spending spree with something called the Inflation Reduction Act, which I sometimes called the "Inflation Nonreduction Act" because it won't reduce inflation anytime soon. In fact, it includes nearly half a trillion dollars in new spending.

Anybody who has followed what you do when inflation is raging, as it is now, knows there are usually two components: one is the Federal Reserve that controls monetary policy; in other words, interest rates. They can slow down the economy. They can try to take a shot at inflation by slowing down the economy and raising interest rates, but of course that means the money we have to pay to service the debt that we are incurring here just gets bigger and bigger.

There is a second component, too, when it comes to tackling inflation, and that is the fiscal side, the spending. The reason why we still see inflation at a 40-year high is because our Democratic colleagues, on top of all the spending we had to do on COVID-19 on a bipartisan basis, have engaged in a radical spending spree of roughly \$2½ trillion. That has exacerbated the fire in inflation. Many people who are financially well-off have not experienced much beyond an inconvenience, but to working families who live paycheck to paycheck, the prices they pay not only at the pump but at the grocery store for housing and everything else have gone through the roof. They are the ones hurting as a result of this fiscal irresponsibility.

So after the last 2 years, our Democratic colleagues have spent trillions of dollars on their domestic priorities, and they made no push for parity with defense spending. They didn't couple \$128 billion for K-12 schools with new investments in research and development. They didn't mirror the \$86 billion bailout for labor unions with funding for next-generation aircraft or weapons. They didn't pair the \$80 billion for a supersized IRS with funding to support our troops and their families. They didn't match the \$40 billion for transportation projects with funding for infrastructure updates at our military installations. And they certainly didn't couple the extensive unemployment benefits that they provided with pay raises for servicemembers. So there has been no question of parity between defense and nondefense spending these last 2 years.

They spent trillions of dollars on domestic priorities without even entertaining the idea of more support for our national security. Now they cannot widen that gap any further. We shouldn't stand for it. And we can't shortchange America's military in

order to maintain this illusion of parity. And it is nothing more than an illusion after this spending spree that our Democratic colleagues have been on for the last 2 years.

I hope, finding ourselves where we are, that our colleagues are able to make some progress in the coming days and avoid another continuing resolution.

Last week, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin wrote to congressional leaders stressing the importance of a full-year government funding bill. He emphasized the negative impact of short-term funding on procurement, research and development, troop training, infrastructure projects, recruitment, and so much more. He didn't mince words in saying how critical it is to pass a regular appropriations bill, saying:

Failure to do so will result in significant harm to our people and our programs and would cause harm to our national security and our competitiveness.

This is where we find ourselves, and it is not an accident. This is a conscious design by the congressional leaders of the Democratic Party in the House and the Senate, who have said we are not going to have a regular appropriations process that is predictable and done on time and in a way that is transparent and allows the American people and rank-and-file Members of the Congress to participate. Instead, they have said we are going to push it all to the end of the year, backstop it against Christmas and the new Congress, and we are going to tell congressional Members you have those two choices: You can vote up or vote down. But they know that we have a responsibility to fund our military, we have a responsibility to fund our border security efforts, and so much more.

So it is unlikely, highly unlikely, that Congress will fail to pass an appropriations bill and turn the lights out here in Washington, DC, and shut down the government. Our congressional leaders know that, but they have been reckless in the way they have handled this to the point now where we have very few choices.

This is not what responsible governing looks like. Our Democratic colleagues have left the most fundamental tasks of the government to the very last moment.

The Defense authorization bill and the government funding bills are not a surprise. These are necessary to complete each and every year, and the deadlines arrive like clockwork. But somehow our colleagues, the leadership in the House and the Senate, our Democratic colleagues, have gotten us here by design.

They understand how this place works, and they like the fact that they maintain bulk control over \$1.7 trillion in spending, and they use the National Defense Authorization Act to try to jam through other special interest goodies because they realize that with so few moving vehicles across the floor

of the U.S. Congress this late in the year, that that is what will happen.

When you have a must-pass bill, people will look for every opportunity to put in their special project because they know that will be carried along, along with this must-pass legislation.

Inflation remains at a 40-year high, communities across the country are dealing with increases in violent crime, and the crisis at the border is growing more challenging by the day. I can't help but to believe that the American people deserve better than this, and I hope the next few weeks will bring more productivity than the last few months have. And I hope that once we put the business of our national security and appropriating for the support of the Federal Government behind us, hopefully sooner rather than later, we won't repeat this same mistake year after year after year.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ELIZABETH FRAWLEY BAGLEY

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today in support of a dedicated and well-qualified individual who has been nominated by President Biden to fill an increasingly important role. That person is Elizabeth Bagley, who has been nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to Brazil.

Elizabeth Bagley has been involved in public service for decades. Twenty-eight years ago, as a matter of fact, she appeared before the U.S. Senate, then being considered as President Clinton's nominee to be Ambassador to Portugal. She went on to serve in that role from 1994 to 1997, which was a period of growth and positive development in this important bilateral relationship.

For the service in Portugal, she received distinguished awards from the Portuguese Navy and Air Force as well as the Grand Cross of Prince Henry the Navigator, which is the President of Portugal's highest civilian commendation.

She is also the recipient of the Global Democracy Award from the International Women's Democracy Center, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, and the 2013 Secretary of State's Distinguished Honor Award.

In 2013, she served as Alternative Representative of the United States to the United Nations, and prior to that was the first Special Representative to the Secretary of State for Global Partnerships.

In her years of diplomatic service, she has also worked as a senior adviser to Secretaries Kerry, Clinton, and the late Madeleine Albright.

President Biden has nominated her to an especially critical role, and that

is to be our Nation's Ambassador to Brazil—the largest economy in South America, a country that is going through dramatic transitions right now. As a matter of fact, Brazil will be inaugurating its new President at the beginning of January. And I believe—frankly, it has been an embarrassment that we have gone almost 2 years without an Ambassador to Brazil—I believe it is critically important that Ambassador Bagley be in Brasilia, having been presented her credentials in time for the inauguration of the new Brazilian President.

As a matter of fact, in terms of north-south relations, our relations with Brazil are as critical as virtually any nation in the Southern Hemisphere. We have got lots and lots of work to do on this important relationship, and it is important that we move forward.

Originally, I was going to come down and ask UC to both have Elizabeth Bagley discharged from committee and also confirmed now on the floor. Working with my Republican friends, I appreciate the fact that I believe they are going to allow us to move forward on the discharge from committee but not move forward on Ms. Bagley's confirmation as Ambassador. I know there may be some holds on all north-south Ambassadors at this point, but I implore my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. This is a talented, well-suited, appropriately experienced individual. This relationship between the United States and Brazil is absolutely critical now perhaps more than ever, and I hope that we can find some level of accommodation to move past the action we take today and make sure that Elizabeth Bagley is confirmed as our country's Ambassador to Brazil so that she can be in Brasilia by the time the new administration in Brazil comes into power in early January under President Lula.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to support Elizabeth Bagley's nomination to serve as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Elizabeth brings to this position significant experience in diplomacy, law, and foreign affairs. Over the course of her incredible career, she has served our country as Ambassador to Portugal, as a senior adviser to multiple Secretaries of State, and as congressional liaison to the Helsinki Accords and the Camp David Treaties.

At the State Department, she was the first person to serve as the Special Representative for Global Partnerships, an office which worked to advance foreign policy priorities through private sector engagement. She has a background in international law and shared that expertise with the students at Georgetown University Law Center. Through her years advising key leaders like Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton, and John Kerry, Elizabeth gained the experience needed to represent our country on the world stage.